

ABC's Of Health

High Blood Pressure

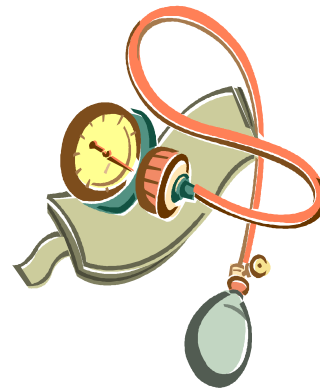
Awareness. . .

As your heart pumps blood to all parts of your body through the blood vessels, the pressure of the blood inside the vessels creates blood pressure.

There are **no warning signs** of **HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE!** You can feel fine and still have a dangerously high blood pressure. It does not hurt, and you won't feel sick, dizzy, or nervous. A normal blood pressure for most people is below 130/85.

You are at **greater risk** of developing high blood pressure if you:*

- Are African American
- Are an older adult



Behavior

High blood pressure can cause:

- strokes
- heart attacks
- kidney disease
- death.

You can **decrease** your chances of getting **high blood pressure** or making it worse if you:

- **Don't** smoke cigarettes.
- Maintain a **healthy weight**.
- Get 30 minutes of moderate **physical activity** most days of the week.
- Have **no more than two** drinks of beer, wine, or hard liquor each day.
- Avoid, or at least **decrease**, stress.
- Eat foods that are **low in salt**.



Change

High blood pressure cannot be cured, but you and your doctor can help you **control or prevent** it by following these suggestions:

1. **Stop Smoking or better yet, never start!** Each time you smoke a cigarette, you temporarily raise your blood pressure by 10 to 20 points.
2. **Lose weight if you are overweight.**
3. **Use less salt.** You can greatly reduce your salt intake if you:



- ◆ Use less salt in cooking.
- ◆ Leave the salt shaker off the table.
- ◆ Use spices (garlic, pepper, lemon juice) and herbs (parsley, sage, mint) instead of canned soups, salt, or soy sauce to season foods.
- ◆ Use fresh fruits and vegetables instead of canned.
- ◆ Use meats and fish to cook yourself instead of canned, salted or pre-cooked products.

4. **Be physically active:** Start slow and work up to at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. (See a doctor before starting any physical activity program)
5. **Limit your alcohol use** to one or two drinks per day.
6. **If prescribed, take your blood pressure pills regularly** until your doctor tells you to stop. Blood pressure pills won't work if you don't take them **every** day. Also:
 - Take your pill at the same time every day.
 - Leave notes to remind yourself to take your pill or have someone remind you to take it.
 - Take your pills with you when leaving home.
 - Talk with your doctor if you think your pills are making you feel sick, or if you have side effects.



*US Preventive Services Task Force recommendation

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